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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CHENGDU 000002

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL FOR CHRISTINA COLLINS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 1/3/2033

TAGS: PHUM KHIV SOCI CH

SUBJECT: HENAN AIDS CAMPAIGNER GAO YAOJIE'S MEMOIRS SET FOR EARLY 2008 RELEASE

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CLASSIFIED BY: John Hill, Acting Consul General, U.S. Consulate General, Chengdu, China.

REASON: 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Dr. Gao Yaojie's youngest sister discussed her two week stay with her sister in Zhengzhou, Henan Province.

Gao is closely monitored and her family members regularly pressured. Gao's next two books -- on AIDS in Henan and her memoirs -- may tempt the authorities to deal more harshly with the 81 year old AIDS awareness campaigner after they are published in Hong Kong as early as March 2008. End summary.

Dr. Gao in Zhengzhou: Finished Writing Books While Under Watch

¶2. (C) Dr. Gao's youngest sister, a US LPR who spends several months a year in Chengdu, discussed Dr. Gao Yaojie's situation, the pressure on her family member, and precautions being taken to ensure the publication of Dr. Gao's books should she be arrested. Dr. Gao spent the last months of 2007 finishing two new books.

-- "The AIDS Wound" [Azi zhi shang] now in the second round of galley proofs, will be published in 2008 by Mingbao in Hong Kong which has purchased the Chinese traditional character rights.

-- Dr. Gao has just finished her memoirs, tentatively entitled "Eighty Years Are Not A Dream" [Rensheng Baxun Bushi Meng] .

-- The approaches to Dr. Gao's building is monitored by five video cameras. The guard is not always there. Two BBC journalists visited her in late November. Family members are allowed to visit Dr. Gao. During her early 2007 house arrest, family visits were not allowed.

-- Dr. Gao does not type so two AIDS orphans she has supported for the past decade came on weekends to type her manuscript. One of them has just started university in Henan. She told them not to tell anyone what is in her manuscript. She has told everyone that her books will not be ready for two years so the police

will not try to seize the manuscript. Her sister says that Dr. Gao feels that there are only a very few people she can trust. Dr. Gao told her sister in late December that her memoirs are complete and have been sent to the publisher (Mingbao) in Hong Kong. She said that both books might be published in Hong Kong in Chinese as early as March 2008.

A Glimpse at Dr. Gao's Memoirs

13. (C) Dr. Gao's sister showed Congenoff a nearly complete copy of Dr. Gao's memoirs along with family photographs and documents. Dr. Gao begins with the background of her family in their ancestral home in Shandong Province, which they had to leave in 1937 because of the war. Dr. Gao writes of her experiences as a wartime college student who moved to southwest China along with the Nationalist government as did many students at the time. During the Cultural Revolution Dr. Gao was sentenced to labor reform for a year and her son for two years. Like many other Chinese, Dr. Gao received a letter in the early 1980s absolving her of the supposed Cultural Revolution era crimes.

14. (C) The heart of Dr. Gao's memoirs begin after her retirement from her career as a gynecologist in Zhengzhou, the capital of Henan. She began speaking out and agitating against the many quack doctors and counterfeit medicines in Henan during the early 1980s. While the Henan authorities supported her in these early efforts, they applied strong pressure against her when she spoke out early against the blood disaster of contaminated blood spread by government run blood banks that pooled blood from donors into tanks and then returned the blood

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to the donors after plasma had been extracted. For many years she has been involved not only in helping people with HIV/AIDS but also their families and orphans. At times lionized by the Chinese media as a heroine and sometimes placed under house arrest or harassed through pressure placed on her family members, she found her life as an AIDS awareness campaigner often a nightmare but kept pressing on.

15. (C) The Henan Province blood disaster remains very sensitive. Both the provincial authorities and the central government were involved in blood banking and the subsequent cover-up. Over the past few years Dr. Gao has continued to point to problems with the blood supply in Henan Province. She tracks cases of people who contracted HIV as a result of blood transfusions and continues to speak out and press the authorities about these cases.

16. (C) Dr. Gao told her sister that for the last five years people getting blood transfusions in Henan had to sign a waiver that they understand that the blood they are getting might be contaminated with HIV or other disease agents. [Note: A Chengdu contact of the Consulate said that a friend had to sign a similar waiver in Chengdu in early 2007 before getting a blood transfusion. A Chinese lawyer asked about this told Congenoff that under Chinese civil law a contract or waiver cannot diminish the responsibility of the hospital but most Chinese people don't know this. End note]

Scenes From Dr. Gao's Memoirs

17. (C) Some of these stories from Dr. Gao via her sister will be in Dr. Gao's memoirs.

--- Dr. Gao told her sister that fifth ranking Politburo member Li Changchun has pressured the Henan leadership to either get Dr. Gao out of the country, put her under house arrest, or under (police?) arrest, with a preference for the second option.

--Dr. Gao said that even after Hu Jintao ordered that Dr. Gao be allowed to go to the U.S. to receive the leadership award from Vital Voices, Henan authorities continued to put pressure on Dr. Gao's son to persuade Dr. Gao not to go.

-- When Dr. Gao was to fly to the U.S., her family did not want to drive her, fearing that an accident would be arranged. The head of the local health department drove her to the airport.

-- At the airport, three senior Henan officials appeared to wish her a good trip. "Here is what we want you to say in America", they said. She threw down the papers at their feet and got on the aircraft.

-- Dr.Gao told her sister that young public security officers guarding her door in February were very confused that the top party leadership of Henan brought her flowers and gifts while she was under house arrest. "What kind of person is this?", they asked.

-- During her early 2007 house arrest, harassment of her family members, especially of her son was much worse than harassment of Dr. Gao herself. Her daughter, son, and daughter-in-law were followed by two public security cars each to and from work. Public Security Officers appeared every day where her son, an auto mechanic works. They would say. "We came to see how you are" and leave.

Dr. Gao's Health

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18. (C) Although Dr. Gao had good results from her Spring health checkup while visiting in New York earlier this year, at 81 she has several problems including arthritis and a cataract in her right eye. Now that her manuscripts are with the publisher, Dr. Gao plans to go to Hong Kong to have eye surgery in March after collecting some clothing for AIDS orphans. Dr. Gao fears that if she had surgery in China, some mishap might be arranged. Her books may be published while she is in Hong Kong.

Comment: Dr. Gao Combats Both Disease and Political Pathologies

¶9. (C) The situation of people with HIV/AIDS in China has improved considerably over the past several years with Chinese government policy changes, including providing retrovirals to some people with HIV. Dr. Gao Yaojie has continued to document many individual cases of blood contamination in Henan province that appear to illustrate a reckless disregard for the welfare of Chinese citizens. For Dr. Gao, HIV/AIDS is not a matter of how many hundreds of thousands or millions of people have HIV/AIDS in China, but of many individual cases, each one of them important. For Dr. Gao, the basic pathology is not biological but the powerlessness of people to protect themselves against the arbitrary power of local officialdom.

¶10. (U) This cable has been coordinated with Embassy Beijing.
HILL